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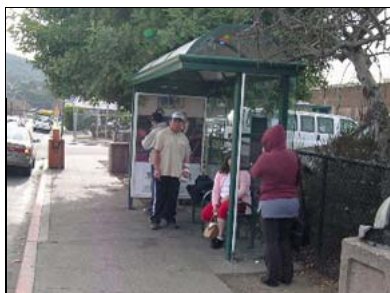
Canal Neighborhood Community-Based Transportation Plan



Prepared for

Canal Transportation Plan
Stakeholder Committee

Transportation Authority of Marin
City of San Rafael



August 24, 2006



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Funding provided by a \$60,000 grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and by the Transportation Authority of Marin and the City of San Rafael.

Copies of this report are available at www.tam.ca.gov or call 415-499-6528.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) started the Community-Based Transportation Planning Program to identify barriers to mobility in Bay Area communities and work to overcome them. Using a grassroots approach, the Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP) effort has created a collaborative planning process for minority and low-income Bay Area communities that involves residents, community organizations, faith-based organizations, transit operators, city governments, county congestion management agencies and MTC.

In spring 2005, the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) received MTC Community-Based Transportation Plan funding to conduct a community-based planning process in the City of San Rafael's Canal Neighborhood. TAM partnered with the City of San Rafael for program management and outreach. With receipt of funding in September 2005, TAM contracted with Wilbur Smith Associates and Marin County Grassroots Leadership Network, a community based organization, to lead the community-based planning effort, which targeted the area of the City of San Rafael south of the Canal waterway and east of Highway 101 and Interstate 580. The Canal Neighborhood Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP) is focused on the residential portion located north of Bellam Blvd. The study area is shown in Figure 1.

This Plan documents the efforts and results of the community-based planning process. Chapter 2 outlines the demographics and travel characteristics of the neighborhood. Transportation issues for the Canal Neighborhood as identified in previous studies and reports are summarized in Chapter 3. The techniques used to reach out to the community and the resulting list of transportation gaps are described in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, solutions to address the transportation gaps identified in the previous chapter are presented and prioritized. Finally, in Chapter 6, considerations for implementation and potential funding sources are discussed.

The Executive Summary provides an overview of the findings and issues encountered during the planning process. In addition, the projects recommended by the CBTP are presented with a brief discussion of project purpose and prioritization.

Through the existing conditions analysis of the community, it was possible to paint a picture of what it is like to live, work and travel in the Canal Neighborhood. The following key findings were compiled from review of general community characteristics, socio-economic demographics, and previous plans and studies.

Key Findings

- The Canal Neighborhood is physically isolated from other parts of San Rafael by the Canal waterway and the Highway 101/Interstate 580 freeways.
- There are limited shopping, education or health services available within the Canal Neighborhood; travel to other locations for these services is constrained by poor bicycle, pedestrian and, to some extent, motor vehicle connections.
- Canal residents make up 20 percent of San Rafael's population; they are predominately immigrants (70% Hispanic), and typically speak a language other than English at home.
- Compared with San Rafael and Marin County, Canal residents are younger, household and family sizes are larger and household incomes are smaller.
- Most housing in the Canal Neighborhood is renter-occupied and the population is more transient than in other parts of San Rafael and Marin County.

- Canal residents own fewer cars and ride transit more frequently than other residents of San Rafael and Marin County.
- Bus routes 35 and 36 which serve the Canal Neighborhood are the most heavily used routes in Marin County.
- In previous outreach efforts, the community said that better connections were needed to other parts of San Rafael, that the bus service should be improved, and that it should be safer to walk and ride a bike in the neighborhood. Francisco Blvd East and Bellam Blvd were of particular concern for bicycling and walking with high speed traffic, heavy traffic volumes and narrow travel lanes. Freeway on and off-ramps are an additional hazard when bicycling on Bellam Blvd.
- Upcoming transportation improvements for the Canal Neighborhood include bus service improvements to be implemented in September 2006 and major streetscape improvements by the City of San Rafael on Medway Street between Francisco Blvd. East and Canal Street.

Key Transportation Issues of the Community

Transportation is a major concern for Canal residents. After reviewing the comments received at Stakeholder Committee meetings, at public workshops and through the community survey, it became apparent that many of the transportation issues being raised today were brought up during in previous planning studies. These same issues continue to be of concern for Canal residents. The transportation gaps can be categorized by limitations to:

Transit access from Canal Neighborhood to other locations in San Rafael, Marin County and the Bay Area

Transit continues to be a barrier to Canal residents. Although Golden Gate Transit routes 35 and 36 serving the Canal have the highest ridership of all routes in the local transit system, residents feel that service is not frequent enough. As a result, buses are very crowded and often do not run on schedule. In addition, existing schedules do not offer adequate service in the early morning and late evening hours, and do not provide convenient service to essential destinations. The most frequently mentioned underserved locations included San Pedro Elementary School (for parents), College of Marin and Mill Valley. Residents also feel that bus service is costly particularly for the short trip to downtown San Rafael and that it would be helpful to have more drivers who can speak Spanish to communicate more easily with many of the passengers. There were also safety concerns about waiting at bus stops, especially at night.

Access to locations immediately surrounding the Canal Neighborhood

The canal and highways create barriers between the Canal Neighborhood and other areas of San Rafael. As a result, travel to locations outside the Canal can be circuitous and heavily congested. Francisco Blvd East and Bellam Boulevard were especially unfriendly to walking and bicycling. The heavy traffic, fast travel speeds, narrow sidewalks, narrow travel lanes and infrequent bus stops make it unattractive and difficult for travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists alike. Downtown, Montecito Shopping Center, San Rafael High School, San Pedro Elementary School, and Marin Square were most often noted as difficult to access by walking or bicycling.

Difficulties for pedestrian and bicycle travel within the Canal Neighborhood

Walking in the neighborhood was a concern for many residents. Narrow sidewalks, obstructions on sidewalks, lack of curb ramps, and the challenge of crossing at intersections were all cited. There was general concern about the speed with which drivers travel on neighborhood streets, the lack of attention by drivers to stop signs, failure of motorists to yield to pedestrians, and the lack of street lighting at night especially for pedestrians, bicyclists, children exiting school buses and others waiting at bus stops. It was recommended that additional crosswalks and stop signs were needed.

Recommended Solutions

The following 13 transportation solutions are recommended for the Canal Neighborhood addressing the transportation gaps identified by the community. The improvements listed below were reviewed and prioritized based upon project support, potential for implementation and effectiveness in mitigating transportation gaps. The high priority projects represent those that are being implemented in the immediate future or those that will be easiest for implementation and provide the most ‘bang for the buck’ for the community. Medium priority projects have less support from the community and/or would benefit fewer people. The low priority projects will take the greatest commitment in time and money to implement, have the least support from the community or would benefit only a small portion of the community. The projects are prioritized as follows:

High Priority Projects

1. Adjustments to Bus Transit Service – Adjustments to transit service will be implemented by MCTD in September 2006 including increased frequency and capacity of service, more direct service to Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Northern San Rafael and Mill Valley and more convenient service to Fairfax.
2. Crosswalk and Lighting Improvements – This solution would include the installation of crosswalks and enhanced lighting where needed.
3. Canal Crossing – A pedestrian/bicycle connection from the Canal Neighborhood to Downtown, San Rafael High School, Montecito Shopping Center and other locations north of the waterway would be provided. Initial studies would involve the evaluation of potential alternatives including various bridge designs, a tunnel, shuttle, or improvements to existing routes.
4. Bahia Vista Safe Routes to School – Curb ramps, raised crosswalks and curb extensions will be constructed for access routes to Bahia Vista School in Fall 2006.
5. Bus Shelters – Additional bus shelters would be installed where feasible.
6. Canal Neighborhood Safety and Streetscape Improvement Project – This solution would involve the study of neighborhood traffic, circulation and safety hazards to identify and implement safety and streetscape improvements for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Medium Priority Projects

7. ‘Street Smarts’ Program – This program utilizes public education to address the behaviors of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists with advertising and focused community outreach to the neighborhood, schools and businesses.
8. Rides to School for Parents Program – This solution recommends a pilot program to provide transportation for parents of San Pedro Elementary School students to attend school events, parent conferences and for family emergencies.
9. Neighborhood Transportation Information Kiosk – The kiosk would provide information on transportation options available to the neighborhood including transit services, paratransit, 511 rideshare, Commuter Checks, ‘Trips for Kids’ after school and earn-a-bike programs, school buses, etc. The kiosk would be placed in a location central to the community.
10. Highway Crossing – The highway crossing would provide a separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Hwy 580/Hwy 101 between the neighborhood and Anderson Drive.
11. Canalfront Paseo – The Paseo would provide pedestrian/bicycle access on both sides of the Canal waterway. Together with the Canal Crossing, the Paseo would provide access to Downtown, Montecito Shopping Center and other locations to the north as well as fill a gap in the San Francisco Bay Trail between Pickleweed Park and Point San Pedro Road.

Low Priority Projects

12. **Modified Transit Fare to Downtown** – This solution would provide a reduced transit fare for trips between the Canal Neighborhood and the San Rafael Transit Center. It would not affect the fare for trips requiring connection at the transit center.
13. **Car Share Program** – The car share program would provide subsidized hourly car rentals to the Canal Neighborhood for members who qualify for the program.

Prioritization Criteria

Four criteria were selected to be used in the prioritization of the recommended solutions. These criteria reflect the relative effectiveness of the project and the project's potential for implementation. Each solution was evaluated with a ranking of High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) with High reflecting the best scoring for that criteria. The solution evaluation matrix showing the detailed ranking of each solution is included in Table ES-1. The evaluation was based upon input from the community, discussions with City and County agency staff, goals of the community-based planning process, and existing planning documents. They are:

Community

- **Has community support** – The success of any project requires that it has the support of the community not only for calculation of potential usage but also to support agency staff or community leaders in their efforts to make the project a reality. Does the solution have the support necessary for success? Project support was assessed from results of community input.
- **Impacts population with the greatest need** – Does this solution target the population with the greatest barriers to mobility targeted by this solution?
- **Benefits a large portion of the community** – Does this solution benefits a large portion of the community rather than a select few?

Funding and Cost

- **Cost effective** – Is the cost reasonable as compared to the number of people who would benefit?
- **Funding secured** – Has funding been dedicated for implementation?
- **Low-cost or no-cost** – Can the project be implemented for less than \$50,000?

Implementation

- **Ease of Implementation** – Does this project involve the cooperation of many jurisdictions and agencies? Does implementation require resolution of numerous constraints, such as environmental, engineering, maintenance or operations?
- **Potential for champion** – Is there a group or individual in either the public or private sector that might champion this project? Can a champion be identified?
- **Compatible with existing plans** – Is this solution directly identified in an agency planning document or is it supportive or existing plans?

Transportation

- **Solves multiple transportation gaps** – Does this solution address many transportation gaps?
- **Benefit extends beyond the community** – Do the benefits of this solution extend beyond the Canal Neighborhood and also benefit other residents of the City of San Rafael or Marin County?
- **Easy to use** – Will potential patrons of this solution find it understandable and accessible?

Table ES - I: Solution Evaluation Matrix

	Adjustments to Bus Transit Service	Crosswalk and Lighting Imps.	Canal Crossing	Bahia Vista SR2S	Bus Shelters	Safety and Streetscape Project	'Street Smarts' Program	Rides to School for Parents	Information Kiosk	Highway Crossing	Canalfront Paseo	Modified Transit Fare	Car Share Program
Solution #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Community													
Has community support	H	H	H	H	L	H	L	M	M	L	M	M	L
Impacts population with the greatest need	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	L	H	L
Benefits a large portion of the community	M	H	H	L	H	H	H	L	M	M	M	L	L
Funding and Cost													
Cost effective	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	L	L	L	L
Funding identified	H	M	-	H	H	-	M	M	-	-	-	-	-
Low-cost or no-cost	M	H	L	M	H	L	H	H	H	L	L	M	M
Implementation													
Ease of Implementation	H	M	L	H	M	M	H	M	H	L	L	M	L
Potential for project champion	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	L	M	L	L
Compatible with existing Plans	H	H	H	H	H	H	L	L	L	H	H	L	L
Transportation													
Solves multiple transportation gaps	H	M	H	L	L	H	L	M	M	M	L	L	H
Benefits extend beyond the community	H	L	H	L	L	L	M	L	L	H	M	L	M
Easy to use	M	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	M	H	H	L	L
TOTAL POINTS	33	31	29	29	28	28	26	25	23	20	19	16	15
H (3 points) = Solution was best for this criteria; M (2 points) = Solution was average for this criteria; L (1 point) = Solution scored poorly for this criteria													

Next Steps

The effectiveness of this CBTP will be measured by the success in moving forward to implement the recommended solutions to close transportation gaps. The responsibility for implementation of the CBTP will primarily fall on the shoulders of MTC, TAM and City of San Rafael. Their commitment will determine whether this plan sits on the shelf or becomes an active and effective planning tool. The community will also share some of this responsibility; they will be charged with reminding public officials of the importance of these projects and making the commitment to work closely with the lead agencies.

Now that the CBTP is completed, what are the next steps to be taken to insure implementation of the plan? Tasks would need to be refined by staff and additional steps may be necessary depending on the funding source(s) or how the various lead agencies choose to implement the recommendations in the report. The length of time it may take to fully implement the recommendations for each solution may vary depending on capital acquisitions, staffing, participation from local jurisdictions, and funding. The following four steps will assist in directing a plan of action.

1. Continue community involvement

The planning process for the CBTP was designed to ensure participation by members of the community and appropriate public agencies. Although the bulk of the implementation process will be the responsibility of public agencies, the public should continue to be involved to monitor progress and lobby for results.

2. Find a champion

The project will have the greatest possibility of success if a project champion can be found. This can be a person, public agency, community group or public official. Their task will be to keep the project alive and to remind the responsible party of the importance of the project when interest or progress starts to fade.

3. Define work plan and timeline

Starting with the high priority projects, it will be necessary to develop a work plan and timeline for each solution. A clear understanding of the steps needed for implementation will make it easier to focus on each task and know what needs to be accomplished and who is the best person to lead the task. Major milestones should be set to gauge the effectiveness of the effort.

4. Secure funding

The most significant barrier to implementing any of the recommended solutions is, of course, the lack of available funds. Although grants are difficult to get without a well-defined project, it is in everyone's best interest to identify and secure funding (even partial funding) as soon as possible.